

I. Rationale for a GMS Working Group for Health Cooperation

1. The GMS countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, People's Republic of China, Thailand and Viet Nam) have acknowledged the need for more comprehensive, coordinated and proactive approaches to respond to regional health issues. Through various consultations, countries have supported the idea of a GMS platform as a mechanism to address health issues for which the drivers and/or solutions are regional in nature. To embody this collective vision and guide regional cooperation, a GMS Strategy for Health Cooperation is also being created.
2. The creation of a GMS platform for health cooperation is supported by a recently conducted review on the Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) for Human Resource Development in the GMS (2013-2017). The review recommends: *"a GMS Health Cooperation Working Group is created to serve as a regional platform for health issues focusing on cross-border health issues and communicable diseases control, including those associated with migrant and mobile populations (MMPs) and on emerging health issues in economic corridors."*
3. Accordingly, a Working Group on Health Cooperation (WGHC) will be formed with secretariat support provided by ADB. The WGHC will serve as a governance platform to strengthen regional cooperation and institutionalize health as a regional public good across the GMS. The terms of reference outlines the (i) GMS WGHC functions, (ii) GMS WGHC composition and member roles and (iii) GMS WGHC reporting mechanisms.

II. GMS WGHC Functions

4. The GMS WGHC will serve as a platform to promote multilateral and bilateral coordination among GMS countries, particularly for cross-border health initiatives. Core functions of the WGHC are to:
 - Develop, endorse, implement, and monitor status and impact of implementation of the GMS Health Cooperation Strategy
 - Ensure policy coherence and alignment of current regional and national policies and guidelines on health coordination and collaboration
 - Promote knowledge sharing and information exchange on regional health issues
 - Undertake and oversee operational research, reviews, assessments, surveys, and other knowledge products relevant to health cooperation
 - Develop and promote a supportive policy environment for health cooperation such as forging MOUs/MOAs among countries for common issues (eg health security, migrant health, drug regulation, food safety, etc.)
 - Work with existing GMS networks, including coordination with relevant sectoral GMS working groups/forums such as those on Transport and Trade Facilitation (cross border movement of goods and people), Agriculture (zoonosis), Tourism (immigration), Environment (impact of climate change), Urban Development (urbanization and health impacts).
 - Develop a GMS regional health investment portfolio as input to the GMS Regional Investment Framework
 - Identify and mobilize possible sources of funds for proposed regional investments in health.

III. **GMS WGHC Composition and Member Roles**

A. Core Working Group Members

5. To encourage sustained participation and ensure functionality of the group, the WGHC will be composed of up to 4 core members from the International Relations, Planning, and Communicable Disease Control divisions/departments of the Ministries of Health of the GMS countries. It is proposed that Directors or Director-Generals will be a part of the core group, nominated and endorsed by respective Health Ministers. WGHC members are nominated for a fixed term and membership is renewed every three (3) years. Changes in membership is warranted, subject to formal advice from the government to other WGHC members and the Secretariat.

6. Key responsibilities of GMS WGHC core members are to:

- Attend GMS WGHC meetings
- Participate in strategic and annual planning sessions
- Ensure regular intersession communication (for example, shared communications e-bulletin board; occasional video chats)
- Provide technical expertise on GMS WGHC activities
- Support the implementation of activities outlined in the GMS WGHC Action Plan
- Coordinate country-level meetings when necessary
- Share information relevant to health cooperation
- Represent the GMS WGHC in regional events relevant to promoting health cooperation and in joint initiatives with other GMS working groups
- Review reports, newsletters, briefs and other documents prior to dissemination
- Perform other advisory/coordinative tasks as agreed by the GMS WGHC
- Participate in meetings and conferences organized by the GMS Secretariat where appropriate

7. **Country Focal.** From the core group, MOH in each country will designate a country focal. Responsibilities of the country focal are to:

- Serve as the contact point for the secretariat and liaise with other sectors in-country and within the GMS
- Monitor implementation of the GMS Health Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan, once formally endorsed, at regional and country levels, including country level coordination with non-health sectors relevant to health cooperation
- Participate in WGHC special meetings

8. **Strategy Development Focal.** It is proposed that MOH in each country designate a strategy development and implementation focal. Responsibilities of the strategy focal are to:

- Lead the country's engagement in the development of the GMS Health Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan
- Participate in regional drafting meetings.
- Coordinate country level consultations with health and non-health sectors
- Facilitate country endorsement of the Strategy and Action Plan
- Oversee strategy implementation

B. Non-core Members

9. Officers from other MOH departments/divisions and from non-health sectors may be nominated on ad-hoc basis to join WGHC meetings, thematic meetings or other forums as non-core members to contribute to consultations and planning. Example themes include HIV/AIDS, universal health coverage, and cross-sectoral interventions in agriculture, trade and transport, etc. Responsibilities of non-core members will be defined on an as-needed basis.

C. Regional Secretariat

10. The WGHC will be supported by a regional secretariat to be based at ADB. Responsibilities of the regional secretariat are to:

- Convene WGHC meetings and support communications between members, ADB, and other development partners and agencies in the GMS.
- Manage day-to-day operations, serve as the central contact point and coordinate WGHC activities.
- Bring together key stakeholders and technical experts to cooperate on the development and implementation of responses to the health issues that are regional in nature.
- Assist in monitoring and preparing reports on the status and impact of implementation of the GMS Health Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan as input to relevant GMS meetings.

IV. GMS WGHC Reporting Mechanisms

11. The WGHC, supported by the regional secretariat will conduct the following activities throughout the year:

- Regular business meetings for planning and updating on WGHC activities and to discuss the implementation progress of the GMS Health Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan
- Annual meetings with the participation of development partners, CSOs and other relevant organizations in the GMS
- Thematic meetings or workshops (when needed)
- In-country coordination meetings and cross-border meetings (when needed)
- Preparation of periodic reports to the GMS Senior Officials on outcome of WGHC meetings, and to the GMS Ministers and Leaders on overall progress of subregional health cooperation.

12. The regional action plan will outline WGHC activities. An M&E framework including indicators will be developed to gauge the progress and outcome of the work done by the WGHC.

13. The GMS WGHC secretariat will prepare and share progress reports and the minutes/reports of the meetings with governments, development partners and other relevant GMS groups. WGHC members will review and approve the reports before dissemination.